It is indeed a pleasure to host the 14th NOFSA Congress with the SEMDSA at the Elangeni Hotel in Durban on the 12th and 13th April 2010.

An exciting programme has been compiled with contributions from international and national experts on bone and mineral metabolism. The two international speakers are John Eisman and René Rizzoli.

Professor John Eisman is an endocrinologist and the director of the Bone Research Program at the Garvan Institute of Medical Research at the University of New South Wales in Australia and has a special interest in several aspects of metabolic bone disease including the epidemiology and costs of osteoporosis, clinical research and fracture risk. In his presentations he will discuss the epidemiology of osteoporosis, the risk of fragility fractures and mortality in men and women as well as the approach to treatment. Specifically he will address the role and applicability of algorithms such as the WHO FRAX® and the Australian Garvan Dubbo-based Fracture Risk Calculator in treatment decision. He will also critically appraise the current and new agents in the treatment of osteoporosis and the ever vexing questions of who to treat and when to stop.

Professor René Rizzoli is an internist and endocrinologist, with a subspeciality focus on metabolic bone diseases, osteoporosis and disorders of mineral metabolism. He is currently Professor of Medicine and chairman of the Department of Rehabilitation and Geriatrics at the University Hospital of Geneva. In the first of his two presentations, Professor Rizzoli will address the assessment of bone density and microstructure with special reference to children and adolescents, highlighting the factors affecting bone mass accumulation and the micro-structural development of bone. In the second presentation he will discuss the role of nutrition, in the acquisition of peak bone mass in children and adolescents, in maintaining bone integrity in the elderly and the extra-skeletal effects of nutritional deficiencies especially that of increasing fall risk.

Both international speakers will participate in “Meet the Professor” sessions allowing delegates to interact more closely with the guest speakers and to have in-depth discussions on specific aspects of bone and mineral metabolism.

In addition there are a number of plenary lectures by local experts on topics of particular relevance to South Africa. Professor Stephen Hough, President of the National Osteoporosis Foundation, will present the revised national guidelines for the diagnosis and management of osteoporosis, and the effect of exercise and HIV on bone will be discussed by Lisa Miclesfield and Sue Brown, respectively. The topical issue of Vitamin D requirements during pregnancy and lactation will be discussed by Professor John Pettifor and Dr Tobie de Villiers will present data on the newer SERMS in the management of osteoporosis.

The free paper presentations cover a diverse range of topics including basic bone biology to ethnic differences in bone mass, structure and fracture risk, vitamin D and HIV.

In summary, we would like to believe that this congress will satisfy the educational, scientific and practice needs of all delegates with a programme comprising both basic science and clinical topics of national and international relevance.

We look forward to hosting you in sunny Durban and hope that you enjoy both the scientific and social programmes, including the stunning views from the Moses Mabhida Stadium, one of the best in SA, if not the world.

Bilkish Cassim
Department of Geriatrics
University of KwaZulu-Natal